

The role of textiles in the royal funeral of Ain Le'u, Biboki, West Timor, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role and cultural significance attributed to textiles in the mortuary practices of the Atoin Meto people of West Timor, Indonesia, and the use of textiles as markers of extraordinary events. It also considers forms of foreign influence on attire and cultural practices. The case study of the royal funeral of Ain Le'u, the wife of the customary ruler of Biboki, in Kaubele, North Biboki, in 2006 provided the lens through which to observe and document the employment of various types of textiles, including the handwoven warp ikat textiles that feature indigenous motifs, in Biboki mortuary practices.

KEYWORDS: Atoin Meto, textiles, Biboki, West Timor, mortuary practices.

LANGUAGE KEY

Bahasa Indonesia = (I)

Bai Keno / Uab Meto language = (BK)

Latin = (L)

Tetun = (T)

INTRODUCTION

Ain Le'u, the much loved wife of the Kaiser of Biboki, died on 12 March 2006.¹ I'd had the pleasure of meeting Ain Le'u in 2004 in Kefamenanu and she was a most gracious and urbane woman. 'Next time you're in Timor, please come and visit us in Kaubele', were her parting words to me. Little did I know that it would be her royal funeral on 17 and 18 March 2006 that finally took me to Kaubele village in north Biboki, North Central Timor (TTU), West Timor, where she had resided with her husband the Kaiser of Biboki, until the time of her death.

As a participant at Ain Le'u's funeral I was given permission to document her funeral and witness the proceedings that are recorded in this paper. I also had the opportunity to discuss aspects of the ceremonies I witnessed with prominent members of the Biboki community during and upon completion of the funeral.

Kaubele has been the home of the Kaiser of Biboki² over several centuries, Biboki being one of ten princely states into which West Timor was divided in the late colonial period.³ Kaubele's northern, coastal location historically enabled the Kaiser to oversee trading arrangements between the largely inland Biboki Kingdom and foreign traders from Java, South Sulawesi and China who frequented Timor's coast from as early as the 12th century (Gunn 1999: 52–53). European traders frequented the area from the 16th century onwards. Kaubele's location near the coastal ports of Mena

and Atapupu would have facilitated the Biboki Kingdom's access to trade goods and luxury items in return for local produce of sandalwood, beeswax and human slaves.

However, the cultural and ceremonial centre of Biboki Kingdom is located at Tamkesi, approximately 50 kilometres inland from Kaubele (Fig. 1). Tamkesi, often referred to as the 'sacred heart of Biboki', is built on a rocky outcrop high on a mountain with expansive views over the Biboki lands⁴. It consists of two hilltops linked by a ridge, representative of cosmic dualism which permeates the Atoin Meto world view⁵. Tamkesi continues to be the ritual centre of the Biboki realm, where cultural knowledge is upheld and preserved. The Kingdom's sacred relics, *le'u* (BK), have customarily been stored at Tamkesi due to its inland location, which provided greater protection from intruders⁶.

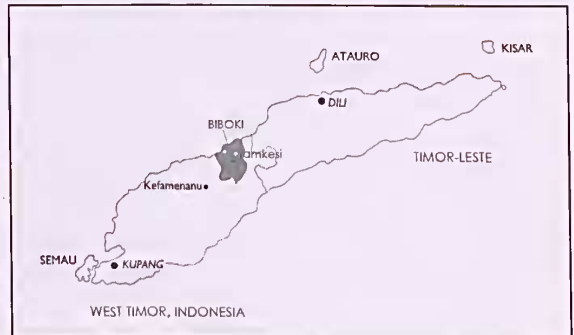


Fig. 1. Map of Timor indicating Biboki, Kaubele and Tamkesi.

It was at the foot of Tamkesi, in the village Tautpah that Ain Le'u was born in 1920 to parents of Atoin Meto and Chinese ancestry. In this region Chinese traders successfully intermarried with aristocratic families, thus strengthening trade relationships, routes and economic power. Ain Le'u, whose given name was Lidwina Us Boko, married the current Kaiser of Biboki, Tnesi Iba Us Boko, the customary leader of Biboki culture⁷. Ain Le'u was a mother of four children, a grandmother to eighteen grandchildren and a great-grandmother to eleven great-grand children. The widespread respect and affection inspired by this Biboki queen was enshrined in her name, Ain Le'u, which translates to 'Sacred Mother'⁸.

CLOTH IN LIFE CYCLE RITUALS

Observing and participating in Ain Le'u's funeral provided insights into contemporary Atoin Meto mortuary and cultural practices. In particular, this occasion provided a lens through which to view the specific role and function that textiles perform in this major life cycle event⁹. Cloth is universally present at life cycle events in Timor and eastern Indonesia, where textiles have been widely regarded and documented as important elements of life cycle rituals, used as attire, banners, mats, hangings and shrouds (Gittinger 1979; Maxwell 2003). In addition to serving functional purposes, textiles also operate as markers that indicate something extraordinary is happening. As forms of exchange used by Timorese people and cultures they:

... signal and materialise the establishment, renewal and termination of relationships. Messages of ethnicity, sense of place, gender, age, social rank political legitimacy and community longevity are contained within textiles. They convey ancestral tradition cross generationally, using a language of form and aesthetic that is deeply imbedded in local cultural consciousness. They can also be important vehicles of magical power, cocooning and protecting both people and objects from physical and metaphysical ills (Leibrick 1994: 9).

THE FUNERAL PREPARATIONS

Upon news of Ain Le'u's death and the announcement of the location of her funeral, people began travelling to Kaubele village. Ain Le'u's funeral was the first royal burial to occur outside the sacred Biboki centre of Tamkesi. This decision marked a departure from local cultural tradition. This choice of venue, determined by Ain Le'u's children, highlighted current shifts and tensions within Atoin Meto society between tradition, customary practices and modernity. The family made a public commitment at the funeral to conduct a secondary burial in the future at which time Ain Le'u's remains will be relocated to Tamkesi¹⁰.

Approximately 2500 people from across the Biboki Kingdom, both commoners, *amat* (BK), and aristocrats,

usif (BK), walked for over two days and nights to Kaubele village to attend Ain Le'u's funeral, which was held on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 March 2006 at the Kaisers' family house. Atoin Meto people from all the Biboki clans, along with representatives from the neighbouring Atoin Meto regions of Insana and Miamafa, attended her funeral. Delegations of Tetun people from Belu joined Savunese, Rotinese mourners, all of whom converged in Kaubele to pay homage and farewell Ain Le'u to the afterlife.

The official commencement of mourning was marked by the lighting of a fire outside the front of the Kaiser's house. This fire known *Ain No'no* (BK), continued to burn from the time of death until the interment of the corpse, which marks the formal completion of the funeral ceremony. The slow burning *kusambi* wood, *Schleichera oleosa* (L), is used for the *Ain No'no* fire. This wood features in Atoin Meto ceremonies of birth and death¹¹. During and following birth it is burnt inside the house. At times of death the *kusambi* wood is burnt outside, locating this life cycle ritual within the Atoin Meto world view of binary opposition, in this instance expressed through the dichotomy of the inner and outer realms.

The *Ain No'no* fire's purpose was to 'heat' the ceremony and to guard Ain Le'u on her journey to the afterlife. This is in keeping with the extraordinary, dangerous heated state induced by Ain Le'u's death. Only once the funeral is completed can the 'cool' state, denoting safety and calm, return. Hence, the forming and lighting of the fire was a protective device, which was the specific responsibility of three Biboki clan groups, Naek Le'u, Subun and Tas Au¹². Senior clan representatives were duty bound to guard the fire, day and night, until Ain Le'u's body was finally interred.

With the *Ain No'no* fire lit three days before the funeral, people began to gather at the Kaiser's family house. Upon arrival, mourners were greeted by the Kaiser who was inside the mourning room or near the *Ai No'no* fire. The Kaiser wore his headscarf, *piln* (BK), slanted to the right side, symbolic of his wife's death and his state of mourning in the sphere of death. Following the conclusion of the ceremony, the peak of his *piln* would be worn in a central position signifying his return to the sphere of life (Meta pers. comm. Kaubele, 17 March 2006). Such practices are consistent with mortuary practices described by Middlekoop (1963: 26).

The procession of mourners was invited to enter the front living room where Ain Le'u lay in state. As each new guest or group of guests¹³ entered the room a metal gong, *sene* (BK), was struck by a male chief mourner. Each arrival was announced by seven strikes of the gong¹⁴. In keeping with Atoin Meto tradition, many men and women entered the mourning room by crawling in on their knees and wailing, *litn* (BK). While paying homage to Ain Le'u many women wore their hair loose as a sign of grief¹⁵. This practice is in direct contrast to the social expectation that respectable Atoin Meto women must tie up their hair in public¹⁶.



Fig. 2. A canopy of a man's single warp ikat cloth wrap protects Ain Le'u's coffin. Other woven textiles gifted by mourners are hung delineating the mortuary space.

All photographs by Joanna Barrkman.



Fig. 4. Women enter the mortuary space bearing handwoven cloths in baskets as offerings to Ain Le'u's family.

Ain Le'u's body lay in state inside the front room of the house, within an open wooden coffin¹⁷. The primary mortuary space was defined by the use of suspended white cotton curtains, which delineated the space around the coffin (Figs 2–4). However, at no time were these curtains drawn closed. Suspended above the coffin was a canopy, *neoba* (BK) (Fig. 2), consisting of a men's cloth wraps, *beti naek* (BK). This cloth wrap, woven in the warp ikat technique, *futus* (BK), featured a *beti klaut* motif. This canopy served to delineate the sacred mortuary space while also physically protecting the corpse from dust and dirt (Philipus Manek pers. comm. Kaubele, 18 March 2006). Beneath the canopy the open coffin was draped with a white tulle cloth shroud with embroidered edges (Fig. 5). This transparent cloth was referred to as *kain tele* (BK) and featured an embroidered Christian crucifix in the centre field, denoting Ain Le'u's adherence to the Christian faith.

Ain Le'u's corpse wore a hand woven tube skirt, *tais fetu* (BK) (Fig. 6), which she had made prior to her death using commercially spun cotton and a combination of chemical and natural dyes¹⁸. It is likely that she made this tube skirt with the intention of wearing it as her burial attire as it is customary in Atoin Meto society for women of mature years to weave a special cloth intended for this purpose (Meta cited in Bennett 2005: 26).

The *mak'aif* motif is featured on the tube skirt worn by Ain Le'u. This motif depicts a series of hooks in a lozenge form (Fig. 6) and is ubiquitous in Biboki textiles. According to one interpretation, it represents the linked arms of dancers and is a metaphor for social harmony (Meta cited in Bennett 2005: 26). Ain Le'u had chosen to weave a *mak'aif* motif known as *Fut Mak'aif Hiut* featuring seven hooks. According to local conceptions the wearer's social status is indicated by the number of *mak'aif* included in the motif. In this instance the use of seven *mak'aif* signified Ain Le'u's high social position. A relationship exists between the *mak'aif* motif woven into Ain Le'u's tube skirt and the *beti klaut* motif woven into the warp ikat canopy cloth. These two motifs form a pair of complementary opposites, likened to a bow and arrow¹⁹ (Yovita Meta pers. comm. Kefamenanu 2005). The use of this complementary pair of motifs and



Fig. 3. Handwoven textiles gifted by mourners are hung delineating the mortuary space.



Fig. 5. Ain Le'u's corpse covered with a tulle cloth decorated with a Christian crucifix.



Fig. 6. Ain Le'u's corpse attired with a tubeskirt featuring motif *Mak'aif Huit*, a white lace *kebaya*, gloves and head dress. Gifts of cloths and toiletries had been placed into her coffin.

textiles supports the claim that clothing, in Southeast Asia is an important symbol of status for the dead, as well as the living, as a system of signals intended for supernatural beings (Maxwell 2003: 114).

In addition to these indigenous motifs and paired cloths, other foreign influences were evident in Ain Le'u's mortuary attire. Ain Le'u wore a pair of white gloves and a white lace blouse, *kebaya (I)*. The *kebaya* is a traditional form of Malay women's attire, commonly worn in Sumatra, Malacca and Java from the 19th century onwards. It is an adaptation of the *baju panjang* or long-sleeved blouse that is thought to have been introduced into the Malay archipelago by Arab traders, whose adherence to the Muslim faith prohibits women exposing their shoulders and upper arms. The *kebaya* became an accepted part of traditional Javanese attire and its influence extended to eastern Indonesia in the late 19th and early 20th century, where it has replaced the tradition of women wearing a tube skirt tied either beneath the armpits or waist, leaving the upper body exposed. The incorporation of the *kebaya* into eastern Indonesian cultures, such as the Atoin Meto, was advocated by Christian Dutch colonialists, who also embraced the *kebaya* as a form of attire. The *kebaya*, therefore became a symbol of status amongst Atoin Meto society, indicative of a cultured, modest woman of high status and Christian faith. Another consequence of Dutch influence evident in Ain Le'u's funeral attire was her wearing a pair of white gloves. The

practice of wearing white gloves in Atoin Meto culture occurs at both weddings and funerals and is indicative of the formal nature of the occasion.

In addition to this ceremonial attire, Ain Le'u wore a white cotton headband known as a *tain pele (BK)*, adorned with numerous silver coins. *Tain pele* are only worn for death rites. This headdress exists in partnership with its counterpart Atoin Meto headdress, known as *pet no'o (BK)*, the traditional silver headdress worn during ceremonies by the living. A silver decorative hair comb, *kiln none (BK)*, also made from smelted foreign coins, rested above Ain Le'u's head. Dutch, Portuguese, Mexican and Indian silver alloy coins that had entered Timor during the Dutch and Portuguese colonial eras were sought by local silversmiths and forged into local body adornment (Rodgers 988: 31; Barrkman 2009: 35, 101–108). Ain Le'u also wore a necklace of Indian glass beads, *molo (BK)*, silver bracelets, *niti (BK)*²⁰ and a rosary. Personal belongings such as eye glasses, a hand mirror, a pair of shoes, a makeup purse, a travel blanket, toothbrush and paste were also placed within Ain Le'u's coffin, as these were considered by her immediate family as necessities for her imminent journey to the afterlife.

GIFT GIVING

Mourners made offerings of customary gifts to Ain Le'u's family including money, cloths (Fig. 3), rice, bracelets and animals (such as goats, pigs and cows). However, it was cloth that formed the primary exchange commodity to fulfil obligatory relationships between the mourners and the family of Kaiser and Ain Le'u. In some instances, the cloth offerings were chosen to be hung above the coffin. However, the majority of the gifted cloths were retained by the family to be counted and noted, so that in the future the same 'value' of gift can be reciprocated to the giver's family as occasion determines. Ain Le'u's family eventually divided the cloths amongst themselves, ensuring that each branch of the family had a suitable store of textiles to fulfil their future gift-giving obligations (Yovita Meta pers. comm. Kaubele, 18 March 2006).

It is common in West Timor that gifts are given to indicate the prestige and wealth of the deceased and the powerful connections of the extended family (Coury 2004: 48). The use of textiles in funeral arrangements emphasises the social order of the living and the dead. In such cases textiles, considered a 'female' form of gift, are usually presented by one set of relatives and different types of 'male' grave goods, such as livestock, are presented by another set of relatives (Maxwell 2003: 114).

From amongst the hundreds of cloths gifted to Ain Le'u and her family, specific tube skirts, *tais feto* (BK), and men's wraps, *beti naek* (BK), were chosen to be hung from the canopy surrounding her coffin (Figs 2 and 4). Other gifted textiles were selected by the family and placed inside Ain Le'u's coffin, to accompany her to the afterlife.²¹ Cloths selected for this purpose denoted specific clan alliances and relationships. One example of an intricate tube skirt with a motif from the Insana Kingdom was rolled up and strategically placed in Ain Le'u's coffin (Fig. 6). This symbolised the relationship between the royal Us Boko clan of Biboki Kingdom and the royal Us Finit clan of Insana Kingdom.²²

Another tube skirt selected for inclusion in Ain Le'u's coffin was a hand spun and naturally dyed tube skirt known as *tais ha ma buna* (BK), which featured the single warp ikat motif *mak'aif'nim* (BK)²³. It also featured three bands of motifs woven using the intricate discontinuous supplementary weft wrapping technique known as *buna*. This weaving technique is a significant marker of status on Atoin Meto women's textiles. Three or more bands of *buna* motifs are only permitted to be worn by aristocratic women, who traditionally were the master weavers, having access to the requisite materials and time to execute the production of such complex textile techniques.

The choice of this gifted tube skirt given to accompany Ain Le'u to the afterlife was determined by the strong allegiance that exists between the Nahas clan of Sainup village and the royal Us Boko clan²⁴. This relationship eventuated due to military support provided by the Nahas



Fig. 7. Martha Ane wearing a *paek metan*, symbolic of her state of mourning.

clan to the Kaiser of Biboki that resulted in the Nahas clan being bestowed with land and a marriage alliance with the royal Us Boko clan. However, before this magnificently woven tube skirt, produced by Belendina Kela of Sainup village, could be placed into the coffin, Ain Le'u's daughter was invited to cut into the edge of the *buna* decoration on the tube skirt. Using a small pair of scissors to perform this act, it ensured the cloth's imperfection, thus making it an accurate reflection of the mundane, imperfect world of the living – in contrast to the perfect, ideal world of the ancestors, to which Ain Le'u was destined²⁵.

MOURNING ATTIRE AND CEREMONIAL PARAPHERNALIA

Public displays of grief were evident in the attire worn by the mourners. As the elders of the clans gathered on 17 March 2006 to sing mourning song cycles known as *Boin Nitu*²⁶ and to dance the *bonet boen nitu* and *naben* dances throughout the night preceding the funeral, hundreds of the mourners wore a small black swatch of cloth pinned to their garments (Fig. 7). These black cloth swatches are known as *paek metan* (BK). This practice of wearing a black swatch of cloth occurs in both West Timor and Timor-Leste, suggesting it is derived from Catholic and European influence. While its origins are likely to be found in Catholic practices, in Timor island both Protestants and Catholics



Fig. 8. Kaiser Us Boko with his children in mourning attire at Ain Le'u's funeral.



Fig. 9. Priests perform a Catholic Mass at Ain Le'u's funeral service with robes adorned with Javanese batik cloth.

alike wear *paek metan*. These public signs of mourning are worn for a minimum of forty days up to as long as ten years following the death of a family member. The Kaiser, as Ain Le'u's chief mourner, was expected to wear his *paek metan* for a minimum period of five years (Yovita Meta pers. comm. Kaubele, 18 March 2006). Upon the completion of the mourning period, the *paek metan* is either ceremonially released into a flowing river or else it is burnt²⁷.

As another sign of mourning, people wore plain 'everyday' clothes as opposed to their ceremonial *tais* or *beti naek*. Prohibitions during mourning, such as a taboo on wearing the colour red, with the exception of the chief mourners, were also respected. This is due to the association of red with celebration and power and as the traditional colour of rulers and the attire of *meo*, (*BK*), head-hunters. Ain Le'u's Chinese ancestry was evident through the attire worn by the primary mourners, her four children. They wore white shirts with their traditional Biboki attire during



Fig. 10. A woman is dressed in attire denoting Ain Le'u's royal status enabling her to adopt the role of Ain Le'u's living representative during the funeral ceremony.

the formal funeral proceedings, upholding the Chinese custom of wearing white as a sign of purity and respect at funerals.

On the morning of 18 March the formal funeral proceedings began. Several pigs were slaughtered with the intention of guarding Ain Le'u's descendants against ill health and disaster. An indigenous mourning ceremony and a Catholic Requiem Mass officiated by three Atoin Meto priests occurred simultaneously. Several warp ikat textiles featuring Biboki motifs were chosen to form a backdrop to the pulpit where the priests delivered their sermon, providing another example of indigenous cloth being used to delineate sacred space. Beneath the pulpit, altar boys performed their incantations and burnt incense in front of both the priests and the ceremonial *Ai No'on* fire, which continued to burn. The priests' vestments included Javanese batik textiles (Fig. 9). Formerly considered as a foreign and 'outside' commodity, Javanese batik enjoyed prestige in Atoin Meto society over several centuries where its incorporation into local attire as men's head scarves, *pilu* (*BK*), or as women's sarongs denoted exclusivity, status and privilege. In the contemporary era, the use of commercially printed batik cloth is commonplace and readily accessible to the wider population.

In conjunction with the Mass, indigenous mortuary rites were performed. These rites were performed upon completion of the Mass, with no apparent disapproval from



Fig. 11. A senior man holds *katkiti*, a bundle of offerings of jewelry and money that were later carried in the funeral procession for Ain Le'u.

the officiating priests. Prior to the commencement of the Mass, a woman appeared in the front of the gathering and publicly became dressed as a *meo* (BK), warrior (Fig. 10). This was a symbolic representation of Ain Le'u on the earth plane. She wore a headdress, *tain pele* (BK)²⁸, made from a red cloth, and a set of seven sacred breast-discs, *neon* (BK), that earlier had been hung above Ain Le'u's coffin. These breast-discs were removed from the wall and placed around her neck, symbolic of her assuming a living form of Ain Le'u during the ceremony. She then proceeded to sit beside the *Ai No'on* fire, as a representation of Ain Le'u, during the Mass and other proceedings.

This phenomenon of women dressing in *meo* head-hunting attire traditionally occurs at life crisis rites²⁹. The daughters of great head-hunters traditionally would wear *meo* attire and dance at their father's funeral (Gittinger: 1979: 179). Upon return to society following a period of confinement of forty days after child bearing, traditionally the woman emerged wearing the *meo* attire of her husband, indicating her warrior-like status achieved by surviving the life-threatening event of childbirth. This ceremony is known as 'touching the ground'. As a symbol of fertility, the mother

was adorned with ritual head-hunters' regalia on the occasion of introducing her newborn child to the clan, ensuring continuance of the lineage. Women also wore head-hunters' attire for the *Ta Poen Olef* ceremony, which requests the skills for life for newborn children³⁰. In the instance of Ain Le'u's funeral the physical 'presence' of Ain Le'u as a *meo* warrior affirmed the imminent and potentially dangerous journey awaiting Ain Le'u as she departed the mundane world and undertook to enter the world of her ancestors. She sat in the front of proceedings and oversaw the event. At her feet, a ritual known as *Tapan Mof Nes Nabala* was performed by the senior representatives of the Biboki clans. This ceremony is synonymous with a sword and a sheath. The sheath was representative of Ain Le'u's physical body, which was believed to be departing. The sword, representing her soul, was believed to be remaining.

Initially, money was donated and collected in the presence of the 'representative' Ain Le'u and then divided into two bundles known as *buah maputu* (BK). Bracelets were added to each bundle, before they were tied with cloth – one bundle with white cloth and the other with red cloth. These were then attached to either end of a stick along with two longer pieces of cloth similar to pennants, also white and red respectively. These pennants, *katkiti* (BK) (Fig. 11), were to be kept as a remembrance by the family. The white cloth was representative of Ain Le'u's body and was referred to as the 'foot' of the stick. The red cloth represented her soul that was to remain, referred to as the 'head' of the stick. The *katkiti* were prepared by senior men from various clans in front of the representative Ain Le'u, who sat regally, adorned with the red head band, as opposed to the deceased Ain Le'u, who wore a white cloth head band (Fig. 6).

PROCESSION, BURIAL AND PURIFICATION

Once the *katkiti* was prepared, the family bade their final farewell to Ain Le'u and closed the coffin, which was then carried from the house to commence the procession to the graveyard³¹. Her coffin was draped with a hand woven *beti naek*, woven in the warp ikat technique, decorated with a Biboki motif. The white *kain tele* adorned with the crucifix (Fig. 5) was placed on top of this cloth. The procession carrying the coffin was led by Ain Le'u's brother-in-law who carried the *katkiti* pennants and the *buah maputu* tied to the stick. Behind the coffin, mourners dressed in black with loose hair carried large baskets; *bakul* (BK) on their heads, filled with offerings of cloth that had been given to the family by mourners, signifying the respect and familial alliances offered to Ain Le'u and her descendants (Fig. 12). The procession proceeded through a guard of honour formed by the hundreds of mourners until it reached the compound border of the Us Boko residence. Here, in order to signify Ain Le'u's final departure from her home, three gun shots were fired. This act was possibly an adaptation



Fig. 12. Women carrying baskets of hand woven cloth as part of the funeral procession. This cloth had been gifted to Ain Le'u's family by mourners in recognition of clan alliances.

of the tradition of burial in Tamkesi whereby the gong is struck and rings out advising the kingdom of the death of an aristocrat. Then a dog was strung and shot with the intention of ensuring that Ain Le'u would be accompanied by the dog's soul on her journey from that point onward. Following this event, the chief mourners proceeded to the burial site where Ain Le'u was finally interred.

The other mourners slowly returned to the house compound and gathered near the *Ai No'on* fire for the completion of the proceedings for the ceremony that followed. The Kaiser's younger brother was responsible for purifying all the mourners by splashing them with leaves dipped in water gathered from a sacred water source, *oe le'u (BK)*.³² For ceremonial purposes the water for the royal Us Boko clan is collected by a designated person of the Us Kenet clan, who must wear full ceremonial attire when collecting the water. Sacred water is not used at birth, but only at mortuary ceremonies. This enabled the mourners to leave the heated ceremonial state of the funeral ceremony and re-enter the cool state of everyday life and safely resume their journey homeward, avoiding otherwise anticipated danger such as being struck by lightning. Following the completion of the purification ceremony the *Ai No'on* fire was extinguished using a grass, *hum usu (BK)*, *Imperata cylindrical (L)*³³, as these leaves are considered to be the first natural element in creation.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from Ain Le'u's funeral that cloth is used in a variety of contexts in funeral practices in Biboki. Intricate hand woven textiles are used to adorn the deceased and gifted to her with the intention of these finest cloths accompanying her to the afterlife. Her burial attire indicated her high status both through the motif and intricacy of her hand woven tube skirt as well as through the attire resulting from foreign Dutch and Javanese influence. In the instance of the mourners, their attire was tempered by indigenous or possibly Chinese protocol, which prohibited the wearing of red clothes. *Paek metan*, a form of European influence, were worn to indicate the wearer's state of mourning. Chinese protocols determined the use of white attire by the chief mourners, while batik cloth was featured on the priest's vestments.

Hand woven textiles were also gifted and consequently redistributed amongst the family of the deceased as a means of paying homage and reinforcing clan alliances. In the process of mourning, these gifted cloths were used to frame the sacred mortuary space, which was ultimately delineated by a pair of hand woven cloths featuring Biboki motifs (Fig. 2). This pair of cloths, identified as masculine and feminine, was a manifestation of the symbolic dualism that underpins Atoin Meto society. Other representations of this dualism were evident in the complementary opposites of the *katiki*, incorporating the red and white cloths representing the mundane world of the body and the afterlife into which Ain Le'u's soul was being released, as evident in the mortuary practices described. Further dualism was evident in the headdresses worn by the deceased Ain Le'u and the living representation of her, adorned in *meo* attire. Again the duality of red and white cloth headbands indicated the counterparts of existence, life and death, physical and metaphysical. The final gesture of this adherence to complementary opposites, whether consciously done or not, was the placement of the white *kain tele* with the Christian crucifix embroidery over the hand woven warp ikat cloth featuring a Biboki motif on top of the coffin during the funeral procession. These shrouds physically illustrated the co-existence of the indigenous and Christian iconography and associated beliefs.

Through the perspective of Ain Le'u's funeral it has been possible to gain insights into the manner in which textiles uphold customary notions of dualism as well as embodying various cultural influences. Together, these beliefs and influences form a syncretic belief system, which is evident in the contemporary ceremonial practices of the indigenous, aristocratic clans of Biboki people. Furthermore, Ain Le'u's funeral illustrates the dynamic nature of Atoin Meto culture, reminding us that the textile traditions of this culture are not static. By analysing the uses and symbolism attributed to the textiles used at Ain Le'u's funeral, the continued significance of textiles in the formation and expression of Atoin Meto cultural identity, ceremonial practices and religious beliefs is asserted.

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4. The origins of the Kingdom's name and the location of Tamkesi are preserved in an ancient story. Some Atoin Meto people were travelling with a horse. This horse carried a *boki* (*BK*), a wooden stick balanced across its back for the transportation of goods. When the horse arrived at Tamkesi the *boki* balanced evenly across its back. This indicated to the people that this was a place of special power and so the name Biboki was given to the Kingdom and the site of Tamkesi was chosen as its sacred heart (Ibu M. Y. Meta pers. comm. November 2003, Kefamenanu).
5. The most eastern, male mountain is known as *Bukit Tan Pah*. The western, female mountain is known as *Oepuah*. Together they form *pah-nifu* (*BK*); land and water, considered to be a place of origin for Biboki people.
6. Located above Tautpah village to the west, are a series of dwellings including *ume le'u* of the Biboki Kingdom. It has the special name of *panu* (*BK*) as it is the sacred ceremonial house of Biboki. Nearby the *panu* is the *Lopo Tain Lasi*.
7. The *Neno Biboki* or *Atupas* is the sacral lord of the realm, and as such never leaves the navel centre. *Neno Biboki* can be translated to 'He who sleeps and cats' (Schulte Nordholt 1971: 239–243) provides a detailed description of the ritual centre of Biboki. The current *Neno Biboki* is also known as Klemens Us Boko.
8. Ain Le'u also refers to one who gives coolness and freshness to all she meets.
9. An invitation to attend the funeral was issued by Mrs Yovita Meta, Director of Yayasan Tafean Pah weaving co-operative. Permission to document the occasion was granted by Tnesi Iba Us Boko.
10. As part of the formal funeral proceedings a statement written by the four children of Ain Le'u was read explaining their preference for burying their mother in Kaubele, in the first instance. Following a period of five years, it is their intention that her remains be relocated to Tamkesi. The practice of relocating human remains occurs in cases where people marry into other clans and consequently relocate to a new area. In such instances, the remains of deceased family members along with the objects they are buried with are dug up and then washed before being placed in a small wooden coffin. The services of a specially qualified person are required to perform these tasks and associated rites. This process occurs in a specially allocated place near the burial site. Once the remains are reburied at the new location, a special ceremony is undertaken by the family members in order to invite the spirit of the deceased to follow.
11. At birth, *kusambi* is burnt inside the house, beneath the mother's birthing platform, and kept alight until she and baby emerge after approximately forty days of seclusion. At death, *kusambi* wood is burnt outside the house of the deceased. In both instances the purpose is to heat up the ceremonies and it serves as a protective agent; however, a comparison between the inner realm of life and the outer realm of death is also articulated by this ceremonial fire practice.

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ENDNOTES

1. Ain Le'u was also widely known as *Isteri Kaiser Biboki* (*I*). 'Kaiser' was a term introduced into the region by Dutch colonisers. It replaced other terms such as *Neon*, *Atupas* (*BK*) and *Raja* (*I*).
2. The Kaiser of Biboki is known by several names including: *Koko*, *Neno Anan*, *Paha Tuana*, *Hut Tua Ka* (*BK*).
3. In addition to Biboki, the other kingdoms were Amarasi, Amfoang, Fateleu, Amanatun, Amanuban, Molo, Insana, Miamafano and Belu.
4. The number seven repeatedly appeared throughout the funeral ceremony including seven strikes of the sene; seven ceremonial breast plates, *noen bena* (*BK*), hung at the head of Ain Le'u's coffin; seven strings of *nolo* (*nolo* are considered to be a friend with *noen bena*), seven ambulations of the dance, *ligurai* (*BK*). The significance of seven is attributed to a myth derived from Tamkesi, whereby seven hailstones fell from the sky, inspiring the textile single warp ikat textile motif known as *san sien no'o* (motif showing the impressions of the hailstones on the land). In response to the dual nature of all things in Biboki, there also exists

- a motif known as *san sene* (depicting the seven hailstones). One motif represents the worldly, land based existence whilst the other represents the sky based, unseen, higher forces. This emphasises the notion of keeping seven and returning seven to the gods, i.e. seven for the Gods; seven for the earth/living. (Mr Philipus Manek pers. comm. Kaubele village, Usat Nesi elan, speaker for the Kaiser on sacred matters *Moin Le'u / Atoni Le'u* (BK).
15. Hair worn loose is also a custom practised in the nearby Belu region where people also avoid wearing jewellery and bathing until after the deceased has been buried. Also in Belu it is noted that men cannot cut their hair or wear head cloth, *pilu* (BK), during mourning (Yeager 2002: 50).
 16. In neighbouring Timor-Leste women observe mourning by wearing a black head scarf, *lutu* (T), as a sign of mourning.
 17. Traditionally coffins were made of wood from the *gewang* palm and *kapok* fibre.
 18. Traditionally, it was the Kaiser's wife who had the requisite time and access to materials to produce textiles of the highest quality. Furthermore, it was the Kaiser's wife who had the position to introduce innovation in the textile arts, which were otherwise steadfastly guarded by elan protoelcs.
 19. Bow and arrow is known as *panah dan busu* in Bahasa Indonesian.
 20. Also known as *nit uone* (BK), *keke* (T).
 21. Various other gifts such as jewellery, notes and photos were also included.
 22. Referred to as *Us Boko mafut Us Finit*, this textile illustrated and reinforced the relationship created by the Kaiser's sister's daughter having married into the royal Us Finit elan of Insana.
 23. This *tais ha ma bunua* was presented by Yayasan Tafcan Pah weaving co-operative based in Biboki. Senior weavers from this organisation were present. Mrs Yuliana Nahas, of the Nahas elan from Sainuip village, South Biboki, presented the cloth on behalf of the co-operative.
 24. One of the Nahas women married into the Us Boko clan, directly into the family of the Kaiser of Biboki. Such intermarriage was a result of a successful military campaign mounted by the Kaiser, which the Nahas elan supported. Recognising the support of the Nahas elan the Kaiser bestowed upon them land and a marriage allegiance was formed between the Usboko and Nahas elans.
 25. The hand mirror placed inside the coffin had also been broken for this same purpose.
 26. Alternatively a set of songs known as *Boin Ma Mean*, songs of happiness, are performed at celebratory occasions, such as *Monet Tok Tan'ni* ceremonies when the newborn child's placenta is buried.
 27. In Timor-Leste it can be removed and placed at the burial site where it is simply left to disintegrate (Cecilia Assis pers. comm. 19 Dec 2007).
 28. This style of headdress is also known as *tefan* (Corry 2004: 63).
 29. Textiles, fertility and head-hunting were traditionally interrelated forming a symbolic triad, with the act of weaving being known as 'the warpath of women' (Howell 1912: 63 cited by Gittinger 1979: 31–32).
 30. These skills for life are known as *Monet Tok Tan'ni*. For a boy child a knife, hoe, and *besi kafa* (BK) are the implements used in the ceremony asking that the son be endowed with *fani benas na'ik* (BK), the ability to sharpen knives and axes, *ina helna na'oe* (BK), the skill of cutting and milking the lontar palm and *bae'ka* (BK), the skill of dancing and drumming.

For a girl child *ike, suti, keo* (BK), represent the skill of weaving, *kanot* (BK), the skill of basketry and *bae'ka* (BK), the skills of dancing and drumming are requested by the family. If she can master these arts she will be blessed with a good life (Barrkman 2007: 75–76). On this occasion the *Bonet Pantun*, a call and response chant is recited, which describes the beginning of the world. (Philipus Manek, Kaubele pers. comm. 18 March, 2006).
 31. During funerals conducted at Tamkesi, a large pestle, *esu* (BK), used for pounding corn, is wrapped with a woven shoulder cloth, *bet ana* (BK). In this way the *esu* is symbolic of a person being clothed. Otherwise it is like the deceased person remaining naked. The Naik Nahas, Hu Moin and Sikas elans are responsible for attending to the *esu* on these occasions. Usually during a death in the Usboko elan the pestle is wrapped at the time the *Ai No'uo* fire is lit. After burial of the corpse the *Ai No'uo* fire is extinguished and the *bet ana* removed from the pestle.
 32. Each Biboki elan has two water sources – *oe le'u* (BK), for sacred water and *oe mata* (BK), for daily use water.
 33. This grass is known as *alang alang* (I) and is used for roofs on traditional domestic dwellings.